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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the representation of females in journalism and mass communication programs at universities in the former West Germany. Surveys were sent to 207 men and women, and were returned by 153 people (for a response rate of 71% among the men and 84% among the women). Results indicated that: (1) 21% of the persons teaching at German departments of communication/journalism were women; (2) while almost half of the men were professors, only 16% of the women had reached professorship; (3) 63% of the women but only 40% of the men majored in communications or journalism; (4) more women than men were uncertain about whether they would choose to study journalism/mass communication again; (5) more than a third of the men but only 17% of the women had actively sought their jobs; (6) more men than women can follow their own interests in research and teaching; (7) more than two-thirds of the men felt their careers had developed adequately, while only 42% of the women felt that their careers had developed adequately; and (8) respondents thought that the higher percentage of female university graduates will have consequences for the communication professions. Findings suggest that while female students are the majority among mass communication and journalism students in Germany, female teachers and researchers are still a minority. Research needs to continue on this topic, since it remains to be seen if comparisons exist between Germany and the United States. (Contains 20 references, 4 notes, and 2 figures of data.) (RS)

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From Preponderance to Underrepresentation: Female Faculty in Journalism and Mass Communication in Germany

Results of the first study on representation and situation of women in German mass communication and journalism departments

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Since the late seventies in the United States, the number of women in mass communication careers significantly increased. Since 1977 the majority of students enrolled in journalism and mass communication departments has been female. At present the ratio between female and male students in these departments is approximately 60 to 40% respectively. One predicts that North American mass media, advertising and public relations in less than ten years will be dominated by a large female majority.

In the meantime, the "femininization" of the American mass communication field and phenomena like the "velvet ghetto" or the "pink-collar ghetto" are popular research topics in gender-related mass communication research in the U.S.[1] One of the most interesting issues of gender-related mass communication in the States is the question of the impact of the "gender switch" for society as well as for the mass communication profession and education (e.g. Beasley & Theus, 1988; Cline et al., 1986; Dervin, 1987; Hunt & Thompson, 1988; Rakow, 1986 and 1989; Sharp et al., 1985; Schamber, 1989).

Research in the United States clearly shows that there is no direct link between the number of female students and the number of female educators and faculty members. The fact that for nearly two decades female students clearly represented the majority of mass communication and journalism students did not yet lead to a majority of female faculty. Women constitute only about one fourth of communication faculty in the United States (Schamber, 1989:148). One speaks of the "glass ceiling" effect which means that female faculty can envision promotion and career success, but their actual chances of being promoted or getting tenure are low (Grunig, 1989:125). Numerous studies show that they are discriminated against because of their gender (see, for example, Grunig, 1987; Sharp et al., 1985).

In Germany, unfortunately, there is nearly no, or at least only very little research, on that issue. What we know so far is that women are still a minority in German communications professions. Only one fourth of all (West)[2] German journalists are female. At the same time 40% of the professionals who entered journalism between 1988 and 1992 are women. (Schneider, Schönbach,

Stürzebecher, 1993:10) Since the mid-eighties women have been a large majority in the journalism programs of the two big German public service radio and television networks (Fröhlich, 1992:10-11). But still they only represent about one fourth of overall radio and television journalists (Schneider, Schönbach & Stürzebecher, 1993:10). In public relations the situation is different. As in the United States, this communication profession seems to experience a gender switch in Germany, too. The percentage of women working in public relations increased between 1983 and 1993 from 16 to 41 (Fröhlich, 1994).

But what about women in German academic mass communication programs - female students as well as female faculty? When the first research project on female students in mass communication and journalism was conducted in 1990, 3,487 women and 3,272 men were enrolled in mass communication or journalism programs of West German universities (Fröhlich, 1990). But up to now we did not know anything about the percentage of female faculty. And that is true not only for Germany. Despite the fact that for years academic mass communication and journalism programs all over Europe have been experiencing a gender switch among students (Fröhlich & Holtz-Bacha, 1993a), the relevance of the topic seems not yet to be noticed here. Thus we are not yet able to compare the development in Europe with that in the United States. Interesting questions of this comparison could be whether Europe, after a gender switch in education, will also experience the femininization of its communication professions. Will the European femininization develop along the same conditions as in the U.S.? Will it lead to similar results? Or is the respective outcome different because of different stuctures of education, different structures of hierarchy, different programs of affirmative action in academe, different procedures of promotion and so on? Do female faculty and students in Europe struggle against and with similar problems, and how successful are these struggles? And finally: What can we learn from these struggles here and there?

Again so far we are not able to answer these interesting questions because of missing research and data in Europe. This was the reason for conducting the first survey of male and female faculty members of mass communication and journalism departments at West German universities. It is also the first time that

German communication faculty members have been the object of empirical research at all. With this first step we aim to establish a continuous German research tradition on gender switch and femininization in mass communication and journalism education like the United States has had for decades. We also plan to use this IAMCR conference as a platform to initiate a multi national European wide research project on this topic. In the long range, we aim to install regular surveys on women in mass communication and journalism education together with colleagues all over Europe.

University careers - the German system

As a background it is necessary to understand the German university system with its consequences for its members: All German universities belong to the state[3] , that means all people teaching at the universities are state employees with professors usually having life-long positions as civil servants. Before becoming eligible as a professor a more or less fixed academic career has to be passed.

After having graduated in communications (M.A.) or journalism (diploma), those who want to stay at the university have to get a position as an assistant at an institute or for a research project. The decision about who is hired usually lies with a professor. Beside duties in teaching and administration, contracts for these positions are in most cases temporary and are concluded under the condition of further academic qualification, that means to work on the doctoral dissertation. After having reached the doctoral degree contracts can be renewed for some years. In order to finally become eligible for professorship a second dissertation which in German is called Habilitation has to be prepared. However, having achieved the Habilitation does not mean an automatic promotion to professorship. Instead, open positions are announced and applicants underlie a faculty-internal selection process. On the rule, it is impossible to become a professor at the same university where one has been working as an assistant. So, to become a professor in most cases also means a move from one city to another or forces professors to commute between two cities.

So, the assistant stage is particularly important for a university career. In addition to further academic qualification (Ph.D., Habilitation) this stage has to be

used for research and publications because the selection process for professors is mainly based on the research and publication record and does hardly consider teaching qualifications. Working conditions for assistants are very much dependent on the professors they are connected with.

Salaries at each stage in the career follow a fixed system, so salaries are not subject to negotiation. The individual salary is composed of a basic sum and additional amounts considering the age, family status, number of children, and number of years in public service.

The German university system differentiates two kinds of professors (according to the salary level called C3- or C4-professors). Along with a difference in salary (with C4 being the higher level) both positions differ in the quality/quantity of facilities as full-time/part-time/no secretary, number of assistants, amount of money for books, computers etc. To become a C4-professor does not presuppose to have been on a C3-position before, and there is no automatic promotion from C3 to C4. Again, a change from C3 to C4 usually is connected with a move.

Method

Our study is based on a survey of all those teaching at a German university department of communication or journalism.[4] In order to be able to decide whether our results show a gender-specific or a general trend, the questionnaire was sent to women as well as to men. Among earlier studies dealing with the professional situation and career problems of women in academe (e.g. Sommerkorn, 1981; Hampe, 1980; Wetterer, 1984) only few have made the comparison to men (Röhrich et al., 1989). So, our study does not only go beyond this research but also offers the chance to compile data on the scientific community in communications in general (Fröhlich & Holtz-Bacha, 1993b).

The permanent academic staff of the departments in summer 1991 was defined as the population for the survey. Finally, the questionnaire was sent to 207 men and women.

Earlier studies from the U.S. on women in communications/journalism faculties as well as German studies on the situation of women at the universities

in general served as an orientation for the topics to be dealt with in our questionnaire. Results from the U.S. can only partly be compared to the situation in Germany because of the differences in the university systems and as a consequence the differences in career standards. Nevertheless, we wanted to consider the concepts and results from the U.S. to enable at least an international comparison of *tendencies* for women in the field.

Because no data were available for the German scientific community in communications/journalism before, our study concentrated on the professional situation of the respondents. Moreover, data were gathered on the specific field of activity in research and teaching, on the previous career, and on future career plans. Other questions dealt with specific role expectations as related to teaching and research, and with professional satisfaction: How do respondents judge the climate, cooperation, and mutual support at the institute? Which factors influence individual job satisfaction, and what might be decisive for a transfer to another (communication) profession? Several questions referred to the respondents' experiences during their own study: Which subjects were studied, and how long? Who or what influenced the decision for the subject? Have any internships within the media been made? When and how was the course set for the university career? In addition to the usual socio-demographic data like age, children, living conditions, and educational level of parents we also asked for information about salary group, part- or full-time position, and the kind of contract (temporary or permanent).

At the same time that this survey was administered a second questionnaire was mailed to gather general data about the personnel at the departments and about their number of students. This questionnaire was also sent to the departments in Austria and in Switzerland. All four Austrian and Swiss institutes, as well as 16 out of 20 German institutes completed this questionnaire and thus made structural background data available.

Statistical data

Among 207 Persons teaching at German departments of communications/journalism were 43 women which equals one fifth (21%). Among these 207 who received the questionnaire 83 had the position of a professor which means that 40% of all those teaching are (full) professors. In summer 1991, 92% of the professors were men. While almost half the men (n = 76) were professors only 16% of the women (n = 7) had reached professorship. Among the others 37 men and 10 women had a doctoral degree. These figures refer to those having received our questionnaire (but not necessarily answered).

117 men and 36 women answered the questionnaire. Thus, the response rate was 74% altogether. As expected, with 84% the response rate among women was higher than among men (71 %). The following data are based on the 153 questionnaires which were returned.

Study and entry to the profession

63% (n = 22) of the women but only 40% (n = 45) of the men teaching at the communication departments today have majored in communications or journalism. So, while the majority of the female faculty members come from the discipline itself, most men have studied other subjects among which the philologies and economics are represented the most. This also explains why more men than women have received another degree than the M.A. which is the regular degree in communications. The majority of men come from disciplines which offer either a diploma or a state exam as their first degree (as for example in economics, psychology, the philologies). For men it is obviously no obstacle for entering the communications/journalism faculties if they have majored in another discipline.

During the course of study there are also differences between women and men. It seems as if women at the beginning were more sure what to study because less women than men have changed the discipline. While more than one third of the men have changed once or even more often, among women it is only about one fourth. However, the picture changes somewhat when we compare the answers to the question whether the respondents would choose the same subject again. If we extract the answers of those who have majored in communications or

journalism with about one third the group of women and men who would certainly study the same subject again is almost equal. After adding up the answers "yes, certainly" and "yes, probably", 90% of the men but only about two thirds of the women would study communications/journalism again. So, among women we now find a bigger group which is uncertain about choosing the same subject again. That means, if men have studied communications/journalism they are more convinced than women afterwards that they made the right decision. Picture 1 shows the results for those who have graduated in communications or journalism.

// Picture 1 //

Professional career and satisfaction

Earlier studies had ascertained that university careers of women are not so much planned but more often are started just by chance (e.g. Wetterer, 1984). This is confirmed by our results showing that most female respondents have not actively sought a job at the university. Almost two thirds of the women as well as about half the men have been *offered* their first position at the university by a professor. More than a third of the men compared to only 17% of the women have actively sought the job. That might mean that for women a university career was even less often than for men a profession they had *aimed* for. It also could mean that women are offered their jobs more often in an informal way. Nevertheless, as many men as women attribute their university career just to chance, having neither actively planned it nor having been offered the first job by a professor.

The expectations they held when entering the faculty have completely been met for 35% of the male and 31% of the female respondents. Among those answering their expectations were fulfilled only to some extent, 38% (n = 22) of the men and 44% (n = 8) of the women say that the conditions for research are not as expected. For women, limited research opportunities were the main cause of disappointment.

Obviously men more than women can follow their own interests in research and in teaching. The results presented in Picture 2 show that more women than men point to limitations in their freedom of teaching and research.

// Picture 2 //

This may also be due to the fact that only few women among our respondents are (full) professors thus not being in the position to make their decisions about the subjects of teaching and research independently.

42% (n = 15) of the women feel that their professional career has not developed as it should. Only every second woman is convinced she has reached the appropriate stage of her career, be it according to her age, qualification or professional experience. However, more than two thirds of the men (n = 77) say that they think their career has developed adequately while only 21% (n = 24) feel they should have achieved more. The main reasons given by women and men for a retarded career are personal. That means, most respondents - men even more than women - ascribe the responsibility for the development of their career to themselves (e.g. I am simply too lazy; I am badly organized; I had wrong expectations). Instead, private reasons like longterm illness, financial problems and other family/private reasons or maternity leave as well as the division of labour at the institutes are mentioned more often by women than by men.

That women do not advance in their professional career as they should is also reflected in their opportunities to present their work in the public. Only few women (13%) are by and large content with the number of their publications. More than two fifths (44%) say "it could be more", or that it does not matter to them. The picture is completely different for the male respondents: 42% are content with the number of publications, almost as many say their publication list should be longer. Only just one fifth of the men do not care much about the amount of their publications.

Women also find fewer opportunities to present papers at conferences or speak to other audiences: Only about half the women (47%) speak in the public at least twice a year compared to more than two thirds of the men (69%). Women also attend conferences less often than men. These results for women in communications/journalism seem to corrobate findings from other studies: Women less than men participate in scientific networks and reputation systems. If women say they do not care much about the number of their publications, this could mean they refuse the (male dominated) criteria of the scientific reputation system and

thus prevent their integration as long as they cannot define the criteria for university careers themselves.

Nevertheless, job satisfaction is higher among women than among their male colleagues: 55% of the men and even two thirds of the women say they would definitely choose the same profession again. However, more women than men (78% : 68%) can imagine to change to another (communications) profession. The fact that many women consider to leave the university does not necessarily express their dissatisfaction. Our data offer an alternative explanation: Almost half the women say they will soon interrupt their present occupation at the university, among these are two thirds whose contract will end in the near future. So, the possible leave of women from the university very often is not the result of a free decision but enforced by time-limited contracts.

The situation of women at the universities

The situation of women at the universities in our study was addressed from different angles: How do female and male teachers deal with female students; consequences of the femininization of the disciplines as well as of the communication professions; the professional career of women in the faculties, and the question of gender-specific methods in teaching and research.

On the whole, our respondents do neither expect *considerable* consequences for communications as a university discipline nor for the communication professions in general through the rising percentage of female students. 23% of the men and 28% of the women think the femininization might lead to changes for communications/journalism as a university discipline. Women in particular expect other or new topics to play a role in teaching with a higher percentage of women among the students.

If any, our respondents rather think that the higher percentage of female university graduates will have consequences for the communication professions. While men mainly expect new topics and perspectives coming up, our female respondents rather think that more women in the profession will lead to a better working climate but they also stress the growing influence of new perspectives.

Only few women expect a loss of prestige for the communications professions through femininization.

Most respondents have had female teachers during their study themselves. Women more than men are convinced that women have different perspectives in teaching and research. 56% of the female respondents expressed this opinion compared to only about one fifth of the men.

Asked directly whether they think the professional career is more difficult for women than for men, most respondents agree. Almost two thirds of the women and about half the men say that a university career in communications/journalism is more difficult for women than for men. One third of all respondents think the career is equally difficult for both sexes. Greater difficulties for women are mainly attributed to their problems in dealing with male rules and to disadvantages resulting from gender-specific socialization. Interestingly, more men than women also point to the double work-load of women through their job and their family duties.

Whether quotas are the right method to compensate for disadvantages for women is controversial. Half the male respondents and about two thirds of the women think of quotas as "a good idea with some limitations". However, 29% of the men and 8% of the women refuse quotas completely. By the way, there is a clear relationship between the conviction that the university career is more difficult for women and the acceptance of quotas: Those respondents seeing barriers in the career for women agree to quotas to compensate for disadvantages.

Summary and conclusions

Beyond this survey for the first time in Europe directs attention to the academic education for communication professions. While the data clearly show that women are the majority among mass communication and journalism students in Germany female teachers and researchers are still a minority. Thus, the education of future German communication professionals and researchers still lies in the hands of men. The imbalance between the female majority of students and the male majority of teachers has substantial consequences not only for the (female) students but for the society in general. First, the "picture of the world" presented

in the media remains male-dominated because journalism students - women and men - are taught male criteria for news selection and writing. Because the professional acceptance and the journalistic careers of women are dependent on men, they have to keep to male rules in the profession (cf. Holtz-Bacha, 1990). More women in mass media could lead to a more realistic "picture of the world". Second, more women educators and researchers as well as professionals in mass communication and journalism might mean more promotion for women. And third, female students lack role models. More women in education and research could mean more same-sex role models and more mentors - "especially female senior professors who are powerful and well connected " (cf. Grunig, 1989).

But still, the situation of female faculty of German mass communication and journalism programs seems to be less frustrating than in the United States. This probably has a lot to do with the German nationwide fixed salary system and promotion rules, and it shows how important it is to take structural and cultural conditions into account when comparing international data on women in academe. When we want to learn from international data about the situation of women in mass communication and journalism, we will have to investigate cultural, social, structural, ideological and political conditions more than we have done so far. Thus, future international surveys must also aim to gather data on these conditions for the structural systems in academe as well as the cultural, political and social conditions are very different among the countries in the western world.

We need more women in mass communication and journalism education research and profession. But American research shows that the femininization of the communication profession might result in a negative outcome for the whole field. One speaks of female professional "ghettos" like in PR ("velvet ghetto") and in journalism ("pink collar ghetto"). In the United States, researchers as well as professionals fear that public relations, for example, will loose status and prestige and that salaries will decline in general when a female majority dominates the profession. The femininization of public relations, one fears, will make a "polyester ghetto" out of the "velvet ghetto". As a result of the lack of research we so far know nothing about such a possible development in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. But why should it be different here? Thus, we also need to observe the

results of the femininization process in communication professions in Europe. Will communication and journalism departments at state universities still have the same prestige and status when women "take over" the field? Will states and companies spend the same amount of money for "powder puff departments", like male American colleagues name university departments or company divisions which are predominated by women? And if not, what can we do in advance? All these questions still remain without answer in Germany. We hope our research project initiates continuous research on this topic in Europe so that we can start a comparison of results and developments between the U.S. and Europe in the nearest future.

Notes

1. For a first introduction into this gender related research topic see e.g. Creedon, 1989; 1993.

2. "West" means the so called "old" Länder which are all German states of the former West Germany. This is important to mention because we still have different results in the "new" Länder of former East Germany.

3. In fact, the legislative competence for education (schools, universities) lies with the 16 states (Länder) of the Federal Republic of Germany.

4. The only East German institute situated in Leipzig was excluded from the survey because at the time of the study it underwent a restructering process. Moreover, most of the colleagues teaching in Leipzig in 1991 came from West German universities. So, data presented in this paper only refer to West Germany.

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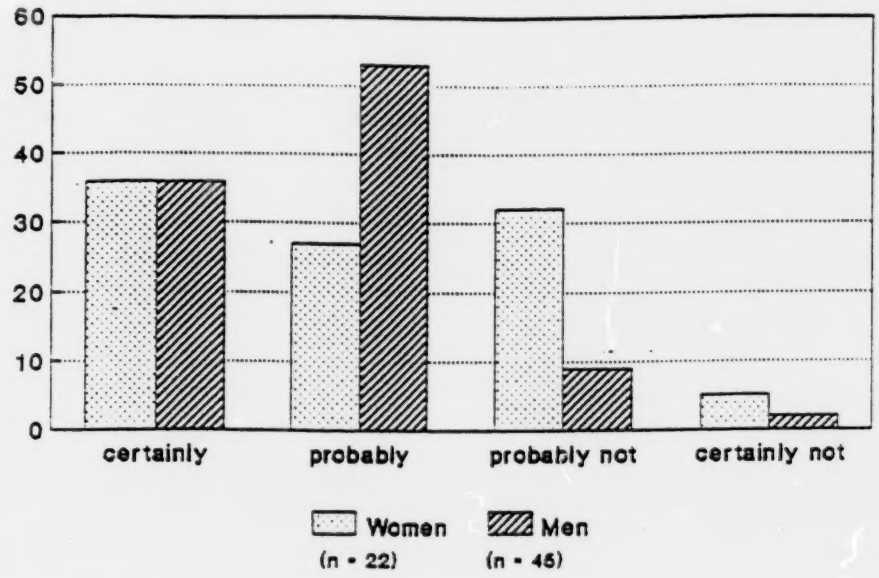
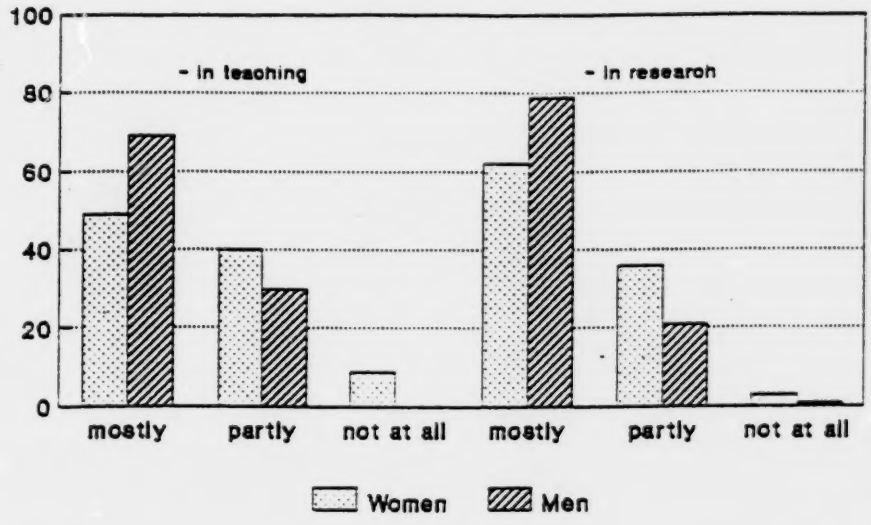
Picture 1
Study communications/journalism again?
- Graduates in comm./journ. only -



Picture 2

Possibility to realize own interests

- in teaching and research -



Due to missing data percentages do not always add up to 100